

Elizabeth Tilney, Countess of Surrey

Elizabeth Tilney, Countess of Surrey (before 1445 – 4 April 1497) was an English heiress who became the first wife of Thomas Howard, 2nd Duke of Norfolk (when still Earl of Surrey). She served successively as a lady-in-waiting to two Queen consorts, namely Elizabeth Woodville, wife of King Edward IV, and later as Lady of the Bedchamber to that Queen's daughter, Elizabeth of York, the wife of King Henry VII. She stood as joint godmother to Princess Margaret Tudor at her baptism.

Her eldest son was Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk. Through two of her other children she was a grandmother of two queens consort of King Henry VIII, namely through her daughter Elizabeth Boleyn, Countess of Wiltshire she was the maternal grandmother of Queen Anne Boleyn and through a younger son, Lord Edmund Howard, she was the paternal grandmother of Queen Catherine Howard. Thus Elizabeth's great-grand-daughter was Queen Elizabeth I, the daughter of Anne Boleyn.

Elizabeth is commemorated as the "Countess of Surrey" in John Skelton's poem, *The Garlande of Laurell*, written following his visit to the Howard residence of Sheriff Hutton Castle.

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Family

Elizabeth Tilney was born at Ashwellthorpe Hall sometime before 1445, the only child of Sir Frederick Tilney, of Ashwellthorpe, Norfolk, and Boston, Lincolnshire, and Elizabeth Cheney (1422–1473) of Fen Ditton, Cambridgeshire. Sir Frederick Tilney died before 1447, and before 1449 Elizabeth's mother married as her second husband Sir John Say of Broxbourne, Hertfordshire, Speaker of the House of Commons, by whom she had three sons, Sir William, Sir Thomas and Leonard, and four daughters, Anne (wife of Sir Henry Wentworth of Nettlestead, Suffolk), Elizabeth (wife of Thomas Sampson), Katherine (wife of Thomas Bassingbourne), and Mary (wife of Sir Philip Calthorpe).^[2] A fifth daughter died as a young child. Henry VIII's third queen consort, Jane Seymour, was the granddaughter of Henry Wentworth and Anne Say,^[3] and thus a second cousin to Henry VIII's second and fifth queens consort, Anne Boleyn and Katherine Howard.^[4]

Elizabeth's paternal grandparents were Sir Philip Tilney and Isabel Thorpe, and her maternal grandparents were Sir Laurence Cheney of Fen Ditton and Elizabeth Cockayne, widow of Sir Philip Butler. Elizabeth Cockayne was the daughter of Sir John Cockayne, Chief Baron of the Exchequer and Ida de Grey. Ida was a daughter of Welsh Marcher Lord Reginald

Elizabeth Tilney

Countess of Surrey



Detail of a stained glass window at Holy Trinity Church, Long Melford, Suffolk depicting Elizabeth Tilney

Born	Before 1445 <div>Ashwellthorpe Manor, Norfolk</div>
Died	4 April 1497 <div>England</div>
Buried	Convent of the Minoreesses, outside Aldgate, London
Spouse(s)	Sir Humphrey Bouchier <div>Thomas Howard, 2nd Duke of Norfolk</div>
Issue	<div> <div>John Bouchier, 2nd Baron Berners</div> <div>Margaret Bouchier</div> <div>Anne Bouchier, Baroness Dacre</div> <div>Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk</div> <div>Lord Edward Howard</div> <div>Lord Edmund Howard</div> <div>Lord John Howard</div> <div>Lord Henry Howard</div> <div>Lord Charles Howard</div> <div>Lord Henry Howard (second of that name)</div> <div>Lord Richard Howard</div> <div>Lady Elizabeth Howard</div> <div>Lady Muriel Howard</div> </div>

Grey, 2nd Baron Grey de Ruthyn and Eleanor Le Strange of Blackmere.^[5] Through her mother, Ida was a direct descendant of Welsh Prince Gruffydd II ap Madog, Lord of Dinas Bran and his wife Emma de Audley.

Elizabeth was co-heiress to the manors of Fisherwick and Shelfield in Walsall, Staffordshire by right of her descent from Roger Hillary, Chief Justice of the Common Pleas (d. 1356).^[6]

Father	<u>Sir Frederick Tilney</u>
Mother	<u>Elizabeth Cheney</u>
Occupation	<u>Lady-in-waiting</u> <u>Lady of the</u> <u>Bedchamber</u>

Marriages

Elizabeth married her first husband, Sir Humphrey Bouchier, the son and heir of John Bouchier, 1st Baron Berners, and his wife, Margery, in about 1466. The marriage produced a son, John Bouchier, 2nd Baron Berners and two daughters. Following her marriage, Elizabeth went to court where she served as lady-in-waiting to Queen consort Elizabeth Woodville, whose train she had carried at the latter's coronation in May 1465 at Westminster Abbey. Elizabeth accompanied the queen and her children into sanctuary at Westminster Abbey when King Edward IV had been ousted from the throne, and was present at the birth of the future King Edward V. She remained with the queen until Edward IV was restored to power.

Sir Humphrey was killed at the Battle of Barnet on 14 April 1471 fighting on the Yorkist side.^[7] On 30 April 1472 Elizabeth married Thomas Howard, future Earl of Surrey,^[8] a marriage arranged by the King.^[9] In 1475, Elizabeth inherited her father's property of Ashwellthorpe Manor.^[10]

Her second husband was a close friend and companion of Richard, Duke of Gloucester who was crowned king in 1483. Elizabeth was one of Anne Neville's attendants at Richard's coronation, while her husband bore the Sword of State.^[11] On 22 August 1485 Thomas's father John Howard, 1st Duke of Norfolk was killed at the Battle of Bosworth while fighting for Richard III; like his son, John was also one of King Richard's dearest friends.^[12] Thomas Howard was wounded at Bosworth and imprisoned in the Tower for several years, and the dukedom of Norfolk was forfeited. Elizabeth was fortunate that Thomas' attainder stipulated that she would not lose her own inheritance. On 3 October 1485, she wrote to John Paston, who was married to her cousin. The letter, which she had written from the Isle of Sheppey, mentioned how she had wished to send her children to Thorpe, pointing out that Paston had pledged to send her horses as a means of transporting them there. She continued to complain that Lord FitzWalter, an adherent of the new king Henry VII, had dismissed all of her servants; however, because of the stipulations in her husband's attainder, FitzWalter was unable to appropriate her manor of Askwell.^[13]

In December 1485, she was living in London, near St Katharine's by the Tower, which placed her in the vicinity of her incarcerated husband.^[14]

After Thomas was released from prison and his earldom and estates were restored to him, he entered the service of Henry VII. In November 1487, Thomas and Elizabeth attended the coronation of Henry's consort Elizabeth of York, who appointed Elizabeth a Lady of the Bedchamber. Elizabeth was further honoured by being asked to stand as joint godmother to the Princess Margaret Tudor at her baptism in late 1489.

Her second marriage produced eleven children, including Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk, Elizabeth Howard, mother of Anne Boleyn, and Lord Edmund Howard, father of Katherine Howard.

Death and legacy

Elizabeth Tilney died on 4 April 1497 and it is commonly stated that she was buried in the nun's choir of the Convent of the Minoreesses outside Aldgate.^[15] In her will, she left money to be distributed to the poor of Whitechapel and Hackney.^[16] However, historian Claire Ridgway presents solid evidence why this will cannot be of Elizabeth Tilney. The will is written 9 years after Elizabeth Tilney died and refers to Elizabeth, Duchess of Norfolk. But Elizabeth Tilney would refer to herself as Countess of Surrey, not as Duchess of Norfolk because her husband wasn't duke of Norfolk when she died (he acquired the title many years later).

Elizabeth Tilney is often confused with Elizabeth Talbot, last Mowbray Duchess of Norfolk, who definitely was buried in Aldgate. With Aldgate ruled out as a place of burial of Countess of Surrey, it is unknown where she was actually buried. Her family lived at the time of her death in Sheriff Hutton Castle near York, but she could have been buried somewhere else.



Arms of Tilney: Azure, a chevron between three griffin's heads erased or



Ledge stone and monumental brass of Philip Tilney (d.1453) formerly in Lincoln Cathedral (where he retired to as a secular canon), the grandfather of Elizabeth Tilney, Countess of Surrey^[1]

After her death, by licence dated 8 November 1497 Thomas Howard married as his second wife her cousin, Agnes Tilney, by whom he had seven more children.^[17]

Elizabeth's granddaughters included not only Katherine Howard and Anne Boleyn, but also three of Henry VIII's mistresses, Elizabeth Carew, Mary Boleyn and, allegedly, Mary Howard, Duchess of Richmond.^[18] During the reign of Henry VIII the Howards, led by Elizabeth's eldest son, Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk, became the premier family of England.

In poetry, art and fiction

Elizabeth Tilney has been identified as the "Countess of Surrey" commemorated in John Skelton's *The Garlande of Laurell*, written by the poet laureate while he was a guest of the Howards in 1495 at Sheriff Hutton Castle. Three of Elizabeth's daughters, Anne, Elizabeth and Muriel are also addressed in the poem, which celebrates the occasion when Elizabeth, her daughters, and gentlewomen of her household placed a garland of laurel worked in silks, gold and pearls upon Skelton's head as a sign of homage to the poet.^[19]

Elizabeth's likeness is depicted in a stained glass window at Holy Trinity Church, Long Melford, Suffolk. She is shown facing Elizabeth Talbot, Duchess of Norfolk, and both figures are surmounted by the Mowbray family's coat of arms.

A highly romanticized fictional account of Elizabeth Tilney's life was written by Juliet Dymoke in *The Sun in Splendour* which depicts Elizabeth, known as "Bess", at the court of King Edward IV.

Issue

By Sir Humphrey Bouchier:

- John Bouchier, 2nd Baron Berners (1467–1533), married Katherine (d. 12 March 1536), the daughter of John Howard, 1st Duke of Norfolk, by whom he had a son, Thomas, and three daughters, Joan, Margaret and Mary; by a mistress allegedly named Elizabeth Bacon he had three illegitimate sons, Sir James, Humphrey and George, and one daughter, Ursula (wife of Sir William Sherington)^[20]
- Margaret Bouchier (1468–1552), Lady Governess to Princess Mary and Princess Elizabeth; married firstly, by agreement dated 11 November 1478, John Sandys, son and heir apparent of William Sandys of the Vyne, by whom she had no issue; secondly, Sir Thomas Bryan, by whom she had three children, including Sir Francis Bryan.^[21]
- Anne Bouchier (1470 – 29 September 1530), married Thomas Fiennes, 8th Baron Dacre,^[22] by whom she had three children.

By Thomas Howard, 2nd Duke of Norfolk:

- Thomas Howard, 3rd Duke of Norfolk^[23]
- Lord Edward Howard^[24]
- Lord Edmund Howard, father of Henry VIII's fifth queen, Katherine Howard^[25]
- Lord John Howard^[26]
- Lord Henry Howard^[27]
- Lord Charles Howard^[28]
- Lord Henry Howard (the younger)^[29]
- Lord Richard Howard^[30]
- Lady Elizabeth Howard, married Thomas Boleyn, 1st Earl of Wiltshire, and was mother of Anne Boleyn, and grandmother of Elizabeth I^[31]
- Lady Muriel Howard (d.1512), married firstly John Grey, 2nd Viscount Lisle (d.1504), and secondly Sir Thomas Knyvet^[32]



The Battle of Barnet where Elizabeth's first husband Sir Humphrey Bouchier was slain

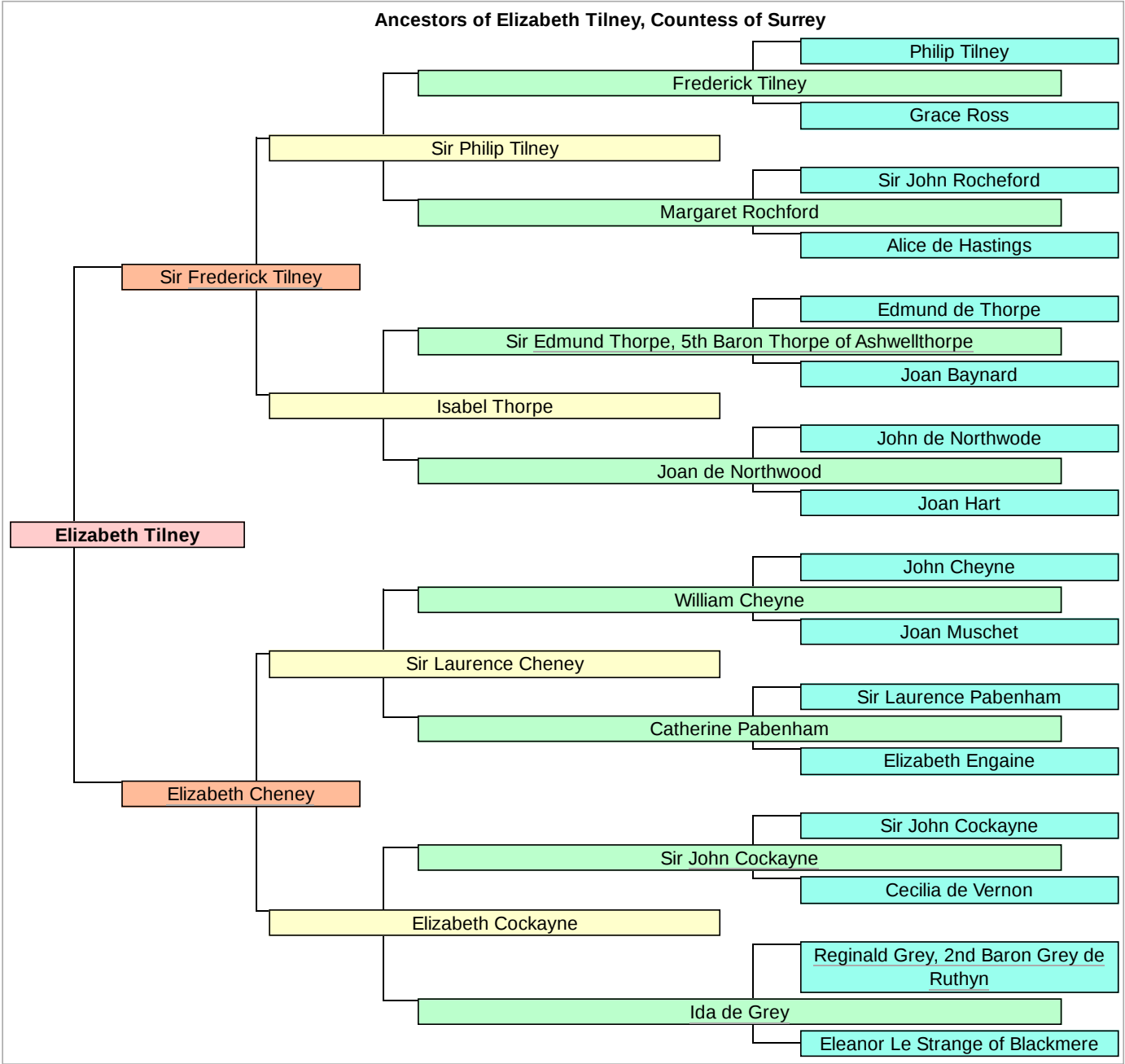


Anne Boleyn, granddaughter of Elizabeth Tilney by her second husband, Thomas Howard, 2nd Duke of Norfolk

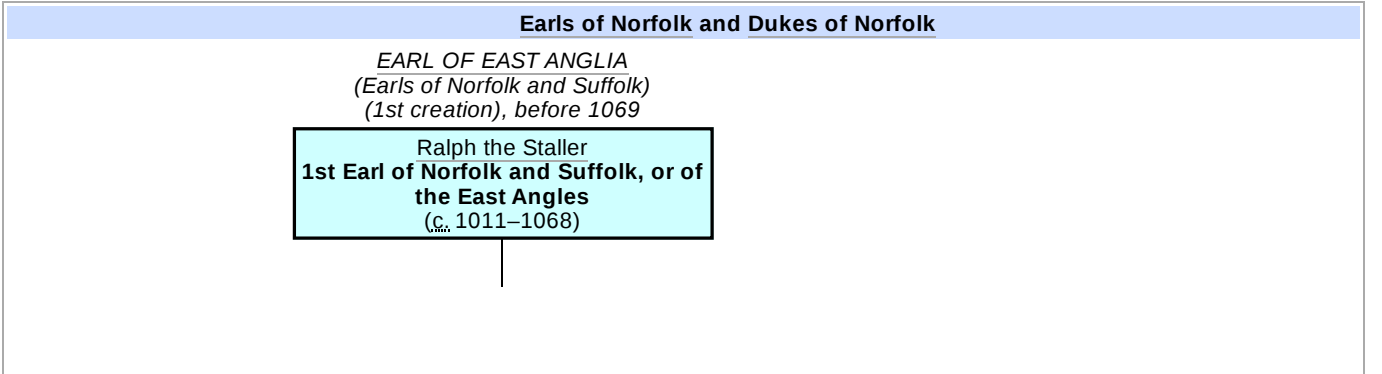
- daughter (died young)^[33]

Family

Ancestry



Family tree



Ralph de Gael
**2nd Earl of Norfolk and Suffolk, or
of the East Angles**
(c. 1040 – c. 1096)

Earldom forfeit, 1074

*EARL OF NORFOLK
(2nd creation), 1141*

Hugh Bigod
1st Earl of Norfolk
(1095–1177)

Roger Bigod
2nd Earl of Norfolk
(c. 1144/1150–1221)

Hugh Bigod
3rd Earl of Norfolk
(1186–1225)

Roger Bigod
4th Earl of Norfolk
(c. 1209–1270)

Hugh Bigod
(c. 1211–1266)

Roger Bigod
5th Earl of Norfolk
(c. 1245–1306)

Earldom extinct, 1270

King Edward I
1239–1307

*EARL OF NORFOLK
(3rd creation), 1312*

Thomas of Brotherton
1st Earl of Norfolk
(1300–1338)

Margaret of Brotherton
**2nd Countess of Norfolk
Duchess of Norfolk "for life"**
(1320–1399)

John Segrave
4th Baron Segrave
(1315–1353)

Elizabeth de Segrave
5th Baroness Segrave
(1338–1368)

John de Mowbray
4th Baron Mowbray
(1340–1368)

*Earl of Nottingham
(1st creation), 1377*

John de Mowbray
1st Earl of Nottingham
(1365–1383)

*DUKE OF NORFOLK
(1st creation), 1397*

Thomas de Mowbray
**3rd Earl of Norfolk
1st Duke of Norfolk**
(c. 1368–1399)

Dukedom forfeit, 1399

*DUKE OF NORFOLK
(1st creation restored),
1425*

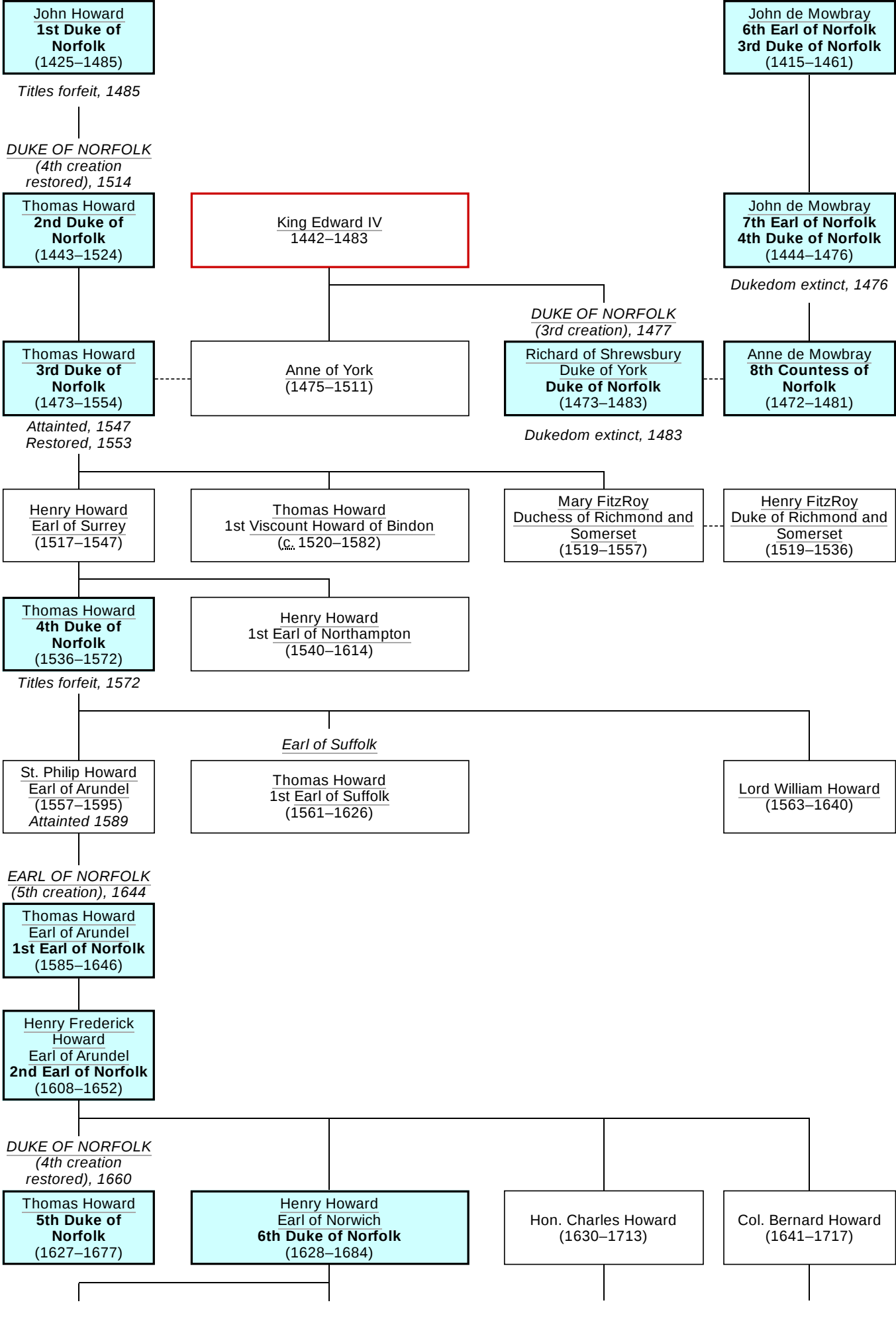
Sir Robert Howard
(1385–1436)

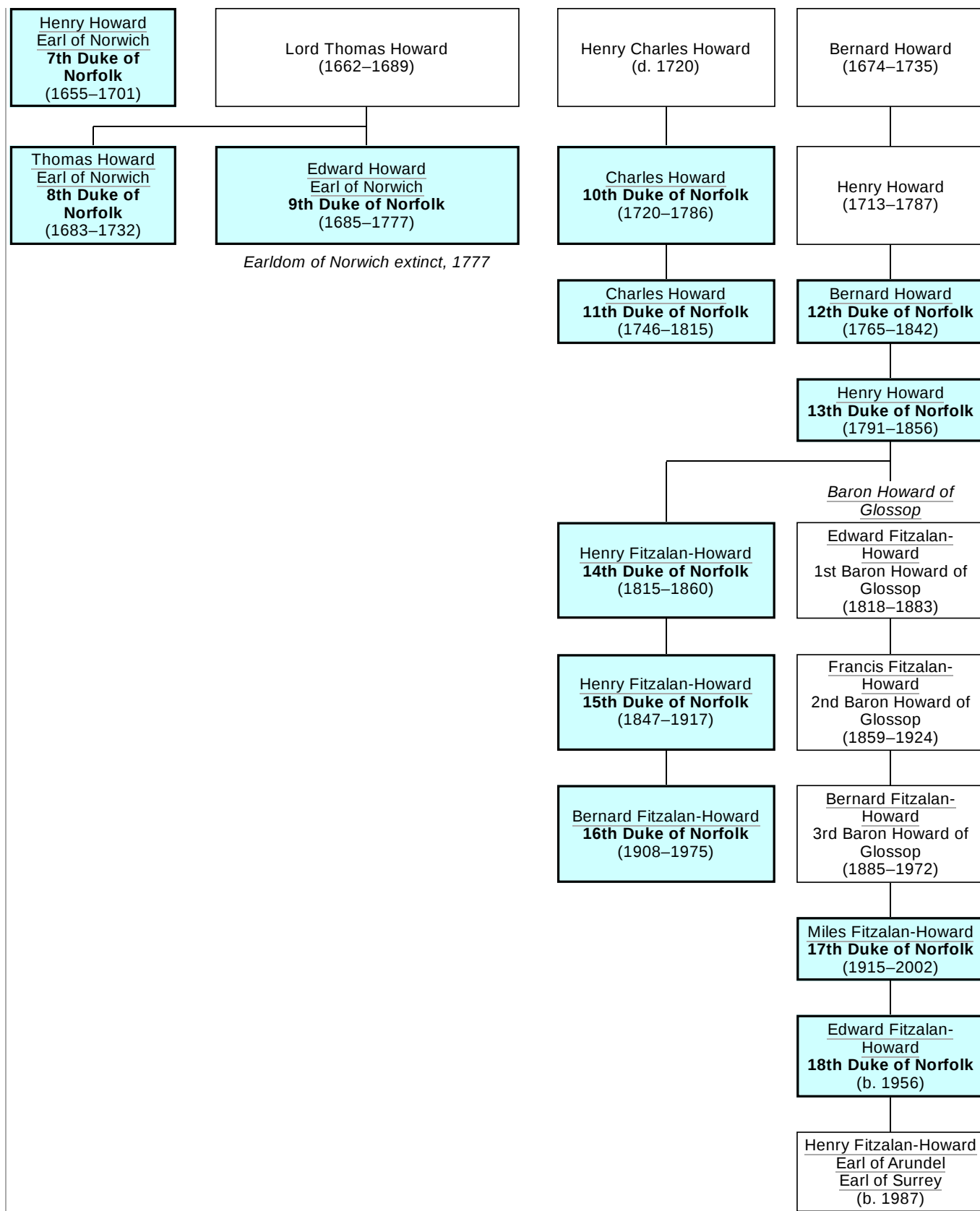
Lady Margaret de Mowbray
(c. 1388–1459)

Thomas de Mowbray
4th Earl of Norfolk
(1385–1405)

John de Mowbray
**5th Earl of Norfolk
2nd Duke of Norfolk**
(1392–1432)

*DUKE OF NORFOLK
(4th creation), 1483*





Footnotes

1. Francis Blomefield, 'Hundred of Depwade: Thorp', in *An Essay Towards A Topographical History of the County of Norfolk: Volume 5* (London, 1806), pp. 142-163 [1] (<http://www.british-history.ac.uk/topographical-hist-norfolk/vol5/p142-163>)
2. Roskell 1981, p. 170; Richardson 2004, pp. 206–207; Kirby 2008
3. Beer 2004; Richardson 2004, pp. 381, 611, 729.
4. G. E. Cokayne. *The Complete Peerage*

5. Taylor 1822, p. 8.
6. Richardson 2004, p. 141
7. Cokayne 1912, pp. 153–154.
8. Richardson 2004, pp. 141, 236; Cokayne 1912, p. 153.
9. *Women of History - Index S* (http://abitofhistory.net/html/rhw/body_files/s_body.htm#surreyelizabethtilney) Archived (https://web.archive.org/web/20160303211917/http://abitofhistory.net/html/rhw/body_files/s_body.htm#surreyelizabethtilney) 3 March 2016 at the [Wayback Machine](#). Retrieved 15 March 2011
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12. Kendall 1953, pp. 193–196.
13. Kathy Lynn Emerson. *A Who's Who of Tudor Women - T*.
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16. *Women of History - Index S*
17. Richardson 2004, p. 237.
18. Hart 2009.
19. Skelton 1990, pp. 23, 31–32; Scattergood 2004.
20. Richardson 2004, p. 142; Cokayne 1912, pp. 153–154.
21. Richardson 2004, pp. 141–2.
22. Richardson 2004, p. 141.
23. Richardson 2004, p. 236.
24. Richardson 2004, p. 236; Loades 2008.
25. Richardson 2004, p. 236; Warnicke 2008.
26. Richardson 2004, p. 236.
27. Richardson 2004, p. 236.
28. Richardson 2004, p. 236.
29. Richardson 2004, p. 236.
30. Richardson 2004, p. 236.
31. Richardson 2004, p. 236; Hughes 2007.
32. Richardson 2004, p. 236; Gunn 2008.
33. Weir 1991, p. 619.

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External links

- Elizabeth Tylney in A Who's Who of Tudor Women (<https://web.archive.org/web/20110519181812/http://kateemers.onhistoricals.com/TudorWomenT.htm>)
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